

XXI.—Letters, Extracts, and Notes.

THE following letters have been received :—

BORNEAN BIRDS.

SIR,—You may be interested to hear of an addition to the Bornean list, which now numbers some 550 odd species.

In a collecting expedition up the Baram River, Sarawak, this year, the Museum collectors secured five little Phalaropes, which I have identified as *Phalaropus hyperboreus*. They were shot about 150 to 200 miles up the river from October 20 to 27. Count Salvadori in his book on the Birds of Borneo, published in 1874, mentioned this species as likely to occur in Borneo, but there appear to be no records of it nearer than Celebes.

Yours truly,

J. C. MOULTON,

Curator, Sarawak Museum.

Sarawak Museum,
December 29, 1914.

MODERN NOMENCLATURE.

SIR,—“What’s in a name.” In the last number of ‘The Ibis’ we find on page 58 the Common Sandpiper designated as “*Tringoides hypoleucos*,” on page 114 it is called “*Totanus hypoleucus*,” while turning to page 168 it appears as “*Tringa hypoleuca*,” the three authors of the papers agreeing neither in generic nor specific names; so that had there been necessity for more authors of papers to write the latin name for this bird, we might reasonably have expected a few more variations! We have heard a good deal lately about strict priority, 10th edition of Linnæus, and uniformity, but if this is a sample of what we may expect in uniformity, it seems we are no better off than before: in fact, the going back to 10th edition names appears to simply add an additional alternative in nomenclature.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

CLAUD B. TICEHURST.

Lowestoft,
January 18, 1915.

THE NEW B. O. U. LIST: SOME CORRECTIONS.

SIR,—May I first be permitted to congratulate the Committee of the B. O. U. on the very excellent working List of British Birds which they have compiled. I wish to state at once that the motive of this letter is not to pick small holes in a big work upon which so much trouble and thought have been expended.

The new "List," however, contains a number of references to the Canary Islands which are evidently based on inaccurate information; as this is not by any means the first time that these same statements have appeared in print, I consider that the present is a favourable opportunity to rectify the mistakes which have occurred.

Having made a special study of the Avifauna of the Canary Islands for the past seven years, especially of the literature, I can speak with a certain amount of authority.

In a list of British Birds only a general distribution is necessary, and it is obviously impossible for a committee to check every reference when drawing up the exotic distribution of each species: the statements of local ornithologists have usually to be taken on trust, and it is very difficult, and often quite impossible, to verify their assertions. Unless mistakes in distribution, however small, are corrected by one who has made a special study of the district, they are apt to be copied and repeated *ad infinitum*.

This is my excuse for trespassing so much on your space: the following comments may seem worthy of consideration by the committee, whose duty it will be to bring out the next edition of the B. O. U. List of British Birds.

The species mentioned are arranged under the names used in the "List," with a reference to the page on which they occur in that work. When a sentence is quoted direct from the List, the entire sentence is put in italics.

CORVUS CORAX (p. 1). It is very doubtful whether the Raven of the Canary Islands is distinct, *vide* Ibis, 1912, p. 625; 1914, p. 235.

- ORIOLOUS ORIOLOUS (p. 10). "*It has strayed as far as the Faeroes, Azores, and Madeira.*" The Golden Oriole has been recorded many times from the Canary Islands, where it is sometimes numerous in spring, when I have seen it myself. See also Meade-Waldo, *Ibis*, 1893, p. 191. It is recorded also by Cabrera, Polatzek, and von Thanner. The Canary Islands are about 300 miles farther south than Madeira.
- MOTACILLA ALBA (p. 40). "*. . . is plentiful in the Canary Islands . . . in winter.*" This is not the case now. It is an irregular winter visitor in *small* numbers, but regular bird of passage in early spring. It has never been numerous since 1889-1891, when a phenomenal migration occurred.
- MOTACILLA BOARULA (p. 41). "*. . . a resident race, M. b. schmitzi, has been described from the Atlantic Islands.*" This is not the form found in the Canary Islands, which has been named *M. b. canariensis* Hartert. Opinions vary as to whether *M. b. canariensis* can be separated from *M. b. boarula*.
- SYLVIA COMMUNIS (p. 65). "*It winters in Africa south to Damaraland, and in the Canary Islands.*" There is only one authentic record of the Common Whitethroat having been obtained in the Canary Islands: a bird having been shot by von Thanner in Fuerteventura on the 1st of April, 1912, and recorded as *Sylvia communis communis*. The explanation of this mistake, which has been copied by many authors, is as follows:—Webb & Berthelot in 'Ornithologie Canarienne' (1810) recorded *Sylvia cinerea* Lath. as breeding in the islands. This is obviously founded on the *female* of the Canarian Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata bella*), as can be seen by comparing their description with that bird. If this mistake had not been obvious, the bird should have been included under the Lesser Whitethroat, as *Sylvia cinerea* Lath. is a synonym of *S. curruca* Linn. and *not* of *S. communis*. It may be argued that Webb & Berthelot referred to the Spectacled Warbler under the name *S. passerina*. This is certainly the case: Webb & Berthelot referred to the *male* Spectacled Warbler as *S. passerina*, considering it to be a different species from the female, which, as already shown, they called *S. cinerea* Lath. It is worth noting that the name *S. passerina* is absolutely indeterminate. It has been fixed by certain authors on to the

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia simplex* Lath.), but in Latham's description the bird is said not to occur in England!

SYLVIA ATRICAPILLA (p. 67). "*Birds from Madeira and the Canary Islands have been separated as a distinct race.*" This is true in so far as it goes, but the fact that *Sylvia a. atricapilla* visits the Canary Islands regularly on migration, sometimes in large numbers, is ignored. The European Blackcap does not remain to breed, but passes through the Archipelago. It can be distinguished from the resident race, *S. a. obscura*, by having invariably a thick layer of fat surrounding the body, which is absent in the subspecies; moreover, the resident race, which never migrates, is slightly darker. For accounts of migratory movements of the European Blackcap in the Canary Islands, see Meade-Waldo (Ibis, 1893, p. 189), von Thanner (Orn. Jahrb. 1910).

SYLVIA MELANOCEPHALA (p. 68). "*The Sardinian Warbler is a partial resident in the countries and islands of the Mediterranean, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. . . . In the western Canary Islands it is represented by S. m. leucogastra, . . .*" From the above it certainly appears that two distinct races of the Sardinian Warbler occur as resident forms in the Archipelago. The type locality of *S. m. leucogastra* is certainly in the western group, *i. e.* Tenerife, but if this insular race is to be 'kept up' we must certainly include the Sardinian Warblers of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote under the same subspecific name (*vide* Ibis, 1914, p. 247).

TURDUS PILARIS (p. 88). "*It winters . . . in small numbers . . . in the Canary Islands.*" In reality the Fieldfare is one of the rarest irregular migrants to the Archipelago. Meade-Waldo saw one bird in three years, 1889-91. The next record is in 1903, when some birds came to Lanzarote on the 20th of October, stayed about a month and then all departed. This is the last record to date.

FLAMMŒA FLAMMŒA (p. 128). "*The Barn-Owl ranges from the Azores, . . . to Greece.*" The exceedingly interesting fact that the Barn-Owl of Tenerife is quite indistinguishable from the typical European examples, and therefore that its southern range is considerably extended, is not noted. It is remarked (correctly) that a distinct race inhabits the Canary

Islands, but it might be added that it is confined to certain islands (*vide* Ibis, 1914, p. 231).

TOTANUS HYPOLEUCUS (p. 230). Proof that the Common Sandpiper *breeds* in the Canary Islands is still wanting. There is no reason why it should not do so.

NUMENIUS ARQUATA (p. 237),

NUMENIUS PILEOPUS (p. 238).

Both the Curlew and Whimbrel are reported by the same authority, Herr von Thanner, to have bred in the Canary Islands. It may be of interest to give references to von Thanner's statements (*vide* (1) Orn. Jahrb. 1908, p. 213, et (2) 1913, p. 190). I certainly wish to prove this for myself.

ÆGIALITIS HIATICULA (p. 244). The fact that two races of the Common Ringed Plover occur in Great Britain is now absolutely proved (*vide* Lowe, Ibis, 1914, p. 395).

ÆGIALITIS DUBIA (p. 246). The Little Ringed Plover is known to breed in the Canary Islands—a fact worth recording (*vide* Ibis, 1912, p. 582).

STERNA SANDVICENSIS (p. 268). "*The Sandwich Tern breeds . . . occasionally . . . in the eastern Canary Islands.*" There is absolutely no proof of this. If it bred in the eastern group in 1841, it certainly has ceased to do so long since. It must be remembered that Bolle in 1857 did not distinguish between this and the Common Tern, which latter used to breed in enormous numbers in the islands, but which has now practically been exterminated by egg-hunters.

URIA TROILE (p. 277). The Common Guillemot has been known to reach the shores of the Canary Islands. It is recorded by Webb & Berthelot in 1841 and Bolle in 1857, who saw a stuffed specimen in the Léon collection in Gran Canaria. This is an additional proof that it sometimes wanders south to about 30° N. in the Atlantic, as stated in the B. O. U. List.

THALASSIDROMA PELAGICA (p. 281). Has bred in Madeira, *vide* "Distribution and Nidification of the Tubinares in the North Atlantic Islands" (Ibis, 1914, p. 448).

OCEANODROMA CASTRO (p. 283). The Madeiran Petrel *undoubtedly* breeds in St. Helena (*vide* Ibis, 1914, p. 452).

RALLUS AQUATICUS (p. 300). "*It occurs occasionally in Madeira and the Canary Islands.*" The statements of Serra and Mompo who are, I believe, the only authorities for saying that the Water-Rail has ever occurred in the Canary Islands, are most unreliable.

GALLINULA CHLOROPUS (p. 305). Our Common Moorhen does not migrate south of the Palearctic Region. The bird found over the greater part of Africa to the Cape is a perfectly distinct *small* race—i. e. *Gallinula chloropus meridionalis* Brehm. The form found in the Canary Islands is, I believe, typical *G. c. chloropus*, and this is probably the southern extent of its range.

COLUMBA LIVIA (p. 308). The Rock-Dove of the Canary Islands is distinct from the typical form. It has recently been separated as *C. l. canariensis* on account of its smaller size grey rump, and darker coloration (*vide* Ibis, 1914, p. 270).

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.,

6 More's Garden,
Cheyne Walk, S.W.
March 1, 1915.

DAVID A. BANNERMAN.

THE NEW B. O. U. LIST: MORE CORRECTIONS.

SIR,—I hope, in the next number of 'The Ibis,' to make some comments upon the List of British Birds recently published by the British Ornithologists' Union. I only wish here to draw attention to four errors which should be at once corrected. Before doing so, I would state that, to me, the List is a great advance upon any previous British List, and predict that the third edition, which must appear before thirty years again elapse, will be comparatively blameless.

AQUILA FUSCA (p. 142). This name cannot be used for the Spotted Eagle, as of Brehm 1823, because in the Dict. Sci. Nat. vol. i. 1804, p. 344, Dumont appropriated that name for a bird which appears to be a stage of the Golden Eagle. According to the B. O. U. List, Appendix, p. 379, the name to be used would be

Aquila clanga Pallas, Zoogr. Rosso-Asiat. vol. i. 1827, p. 351 : Russia.

A curious error has slipped in, the meaning of the specific name given namely "*maculata* = spotted," instead of "*fusca* = brown."

GLAUCION Kaup, 1829 (p. 178). This name cannot be used, as it is invalidated by *Glaucion* Oken, Lehrb. der Natur. vol. iii. pt. 1, 1815, p. ix, used for a Mollusc.

As the Committee consider *Anas clangula* Linné and *Anas albeola* Linné to be congeneric, the name to be used is, to me, at present problematical. By American ornithologists these species are referred to different genera, and therefore the question of priority of publication of the two available names has not been discussed. Stejneger introduced both names in two different publications at practically the same time; so I give the references to both. In my opinion these two Ducks represent different genera.

The names are:—

GLAUCIONETTA Stejneger, Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. vol. viii. p. 409 (published September 14, 1885). Type (by orig. design.): *Anas clangula* Linné.

CHARITONETTA Stejneger, Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus. No. 29, p. 163, 1885 (Advt. dated August 20). Type (by orig. design.): *Anas albeola* Linné.

The latter would seem to have priority, as it was probably published within a week of August 20.

I would accept some blame for these two errors as the facts were known to me, but I apparently overlooked their transmission to Mr. W. L. Slater. I would here mention that though the Committee have acknowledged my aid, for which acknowledgment I sincerely thank them, such was quite unofficially rendered to Mr. W. L. Slater, who undertook the nomenclatural work, and to whom is due the thanks of all British and extra-limital ornithologists for the accuracy seen in this List.

TRINGA MACULATA Vieillot (p. 219). This name is invalidated by the earlier use of the same combination by Linné, Syst. Nat. 12th ed. 1766, p. 249. This correction was published by Mathews (Birds Austr. vol. iii. p. 261, August 1913), who showed the next name to be *Tringa pectoralis* Say in Long, Exped. to Rocky Mts. vol. i. 1823, p. 171, footnote: Engineer Cantonment, near Rocky Mts., U.S.A.

STERNA FULIGINOSA Gmelin (p. 269). This name is retained, not as a *nomen conservandum*, but because, according to the Committee, *Sterna fuscata* Linné "is based on a young bird, and the identification with the Sooty Tern is uncertain." This statement is incorrect, as I have indicated in 'The Ibis' for July 1914, and I cannot appreciate the reason for the promulgation of such a remark. Extra-limital workers would conclude from the Committee's statement that my article has been criticised by them and that I had erred. This is not so, as in this case there is no matter of opinion concerned, but simply facts, and these are absolutely conclusive.

The correct name is *Sterna fuscata* Linné, Syst. Nat. 12th ed. 1766, p. 228 : Domingo.

I can understand any reason being sufficient in the case of a *nomen conservandum*, but an erroneous statement cannot achieve any good but only cause trouble.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.,

TOM IREDALE.

Natural History Museum,
Cromwell Road, S.W.,
March 6, 1915.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union.—The Annual General Meeting of the B. O. U. for 1915 was held on March 10 at the Offices of the Zoological Society of London, the President, Col. R. G. Wardlaw-Ramsay, being in the Chair. There were sixty-two members present.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Secretary read the following Report of the Committee for the past year:—

“The Committee regret that they have to report a further decrease in the funds of the Union during the past year. The accounts, which have been audited in detail by Mr. D. Seth-Smith, show that the total receipts in 1914 were £731 4s. 10d. as compared with £608 6s. 7d. in the previous year, and the total payments amounted to £811 13s. 7d. as against £634 9s. 8d. in 1913. The balance carried forward to 1915 was £32 10s. 7d.

“The great increase in receipts is chiefly due to the sales of ‘The Ibis’ for the final quarter of 1913 not having been received until too late for inclusion in the balance-sheet for that year; consequently the sales receipts for *five* quarters appear in 1914 and only three in the previous year, and the increase thus caused amounted to £92 13s. 9d.

“On the payments side, for the same reason, there is included the payments for the cost of distribution of ‘The Ibis’ for five quarters in 1914, as against three only in 1913, but the outstanding expenditure, amounting to nearly £200, was on account of the new List of British Birds, and the General Index now in course of publication. The greater part of the cost of these two works, however, has yet to be paid, and will place the finances of the Union in a very critical position.

“The increase in the cost of ‘The Ibis’ volume for 1914 is only apparent, as the cost of distribution in 1913, as stated above, only represented three of the four quarterly parts.

“The Annual Volume of ‘The Ibis’ for 1914, edited by Mr. W. L. Sclater, is the fifty-sixth, and the second of the tenth series. It contains 677 pages, and is illustrated with 8 coloured and 18 black-and-white plates and 8 text-figures.

“With regret the Committee report the deaths of Mr. C. A. Ball and Lieut. K. F. Meiklejohn since the last Annual General Meeting.

“The following gentlemen have resigned:—A. J. Cholmley, Col. A. H. Cowie, A. R. Gillman, Lt.-Col. R. N. Harvey, J. H. Leigh, Capt. P. S. G. Reid, Stephen Venour, A. S. Verey, Charles Whympier, W. Strang-Watkins, and C. W. de Vis.

“The name of Mr. R. A. Crowley has been removed from the List of Members under Rule 6.

“The membership of the Union, and comparison with the previous five years, is as follows:—

	1915.	1914.	1913.	1912.	1911.	1910.
Ordinary Members ...	441	433	425	420	419	424
Extraordinary „ ...	1	1	2	3	3	3
Honorary „ ...	9	7	8	9	9	9
Hon. Lady „ ...	6	6	6	6	4	—
Colonial „ ...	10	9	9	9	10	9
Foreign „ ...	20	19	20	20	19	20

“There are 9 candidates for Ordinary and 1 for Honorary Membership, and 2 for Hon. Lady Membership.

“The new edition of the B. O. U. List of British Birds was published early in February, and the Committee hope that every Member will purchase a copy.

“The compilation of the new General Index for the years 1895 to 1912 is completed, and the first sheets are now in type.”

The statement of accounts for the year 1914, previously circulated to Members, was submitted and approved, and a vote of thanks was accorded to the Auditor, Mr. D. Seth-Smith.

Dr. C. B. Ticehurst and Mr. G. M. Mathews were appointed Scrutineers to superintend the Ballots, and the Meeting then proceeded to elect the Officers for the ensuing year. It was announced that Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker had been re-elected Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, and that Mr. D. Seth-Smith had been elected a Member of the

Committee in the place of Dr. E. Hartert, who retired by rotation.

The following nine gentlemen were elected Ordinary Members of the Union:—Edwin Ashby; Arthur D. Bradford; R. C. Staples Browne, B.A., F.Z.S.; Robert A. Currie; George H. Dawson; Sir Henry J. Johnson, F.Z.S.; Eustace B. Matou; William N. May; and Oliver H. Wild.

Mr. C. W. Richmond, a Foreign Member of the Union, was transferred to the list of Honorary Members; and Dr. Emilie Snethlage and Miss Annie C. Jackson were elected Honorary Lady Members.

The Chairman then asked the Meeting to formally confirm the Committee's resolution, that the Annual Subscription to the Union be raised from £1 to £1 5s. He announced that as a result of the circular-letter sent to all Members on May 1, 1914, 222 replies had been received, and of these only 18 were against the increase. He also drew attention to the present low state of the funds of the Union and the greatly increased expenditure which had to be met.

After a short discussion of the Accounts, in which Messrs. Witherby, Iredale, Forbes, and Chase took part, the resolution was put to the Meeting and confirmed.

[*Note.*—A formal notice of the increased subscription will be sent to all Members in due course, together with a new Banker's Order form for the use of those who prefer this means of payment.]

A vote of thanks to the Zoological Society for the use of their Offices and Rooms during the past year was unanimously carried.

A vote of thanks to the Chair closed the Meeting, and the Members adjourned to attend the Annual Dinner, which was held in conjunction with the monthly dinner of the British Ornithologists' Club.

The new B. O. U. List of British Birds.—The volume is now ready, and it is hoped that all Members who have not yet done so will send the subscription price (including postage, 5s. 6d. a copy) to the Hon. Secretary, B. O. U., c/o the Zoological Society, Regent's Park, N.W.

Some copies of the first edition, published in 1883, still remain unsold. Any Member wishing to have one can do so on applying to Messrs. W. Wesley & Son, and enclosing a remittance of 2s. 10d. The remaining stock of the first edition will shortly be destroyed.